



## MASTER FILE

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### DSSD CENSUS 2000 PROCEDURES AND OPERATIONS MEMORANDUM SERIES #O-4

MEMORANDUM FOR      Brian Monaghan  
                                 Lead Assistant Division Chief for Censuses  
                                 Field Division

Attention:              Decennial Design, Policy and Management Branch

Through:              Howard Hogan *Howard Hogan*  
                                 Chief, Decennial Statistical Studies Division

From:                  Kimball Jonas *Kimball Jonas*  
                                 Decennial Statistical Studies Division

Subject:                Observation of Facility Questionnaire Personal Visits in  
                                 Pittsburgh, PA

#### I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Facility Questionnaire (FQ) operation is to identify, locate, and classify group quarters (GQs) before Census 2000, and gather information that will assist in the enumeration of their residents. The FQ is the instrument for gathering this information.

The attempt is made to administer the FQ to all special places (the administrative entities containing GQs) by Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviews (CATI), but not all special places can be reached by phone during the CATI portion of the operation, and the administrators of some special places strongly prefer to make the information available only in a face-to-face contact. The FQ is administered to these special places through the Facility Questionnaire Personal Visit (FQPV). On August 5, I observed a FQPV interviewer in Pittsburgh, PA.

#### II. OBSERVATIONS

I met with the FQPV interviewer at 8:30 a.m. on August 5. We discussed the plan for the day, deciding which special places (SPs) we might try to visit, then she attempted to telephone those special places, contacting two or three of them, and making tentative arrangements to conduct FQPV interviews.

A. First Interview

For the day's first assignment, we drove out to Monroeville, a town east of Pittsburgh, to attempt to interview a contact person for a religious outreach organization. The interviewer had contacted the facility several times by phone, and visited the place twice previously, to try to obtain an interview. The interviewer had instructions to try to complete an interview at the facility today if reasonably possible: the deadline for Wave 3 was that day, and the SP was part of Wave 3.

When we arrived at the SP, we were told that the appropriate person wasn't in yet, but should be there by 10 a.m., so we waited. It was close to 10:30 by the time we actually met with the contact person, a minister who was treasurer of the organization.

From that point on, the visit went smoothly. We introduced ourselves, he ushered us into his office, and the interviewer began the FQPV interview, proceeding smoothly and professionally through the questions. The facility turned out to be a non-denominational Bible college with both students and a fairly large number of staff living in dormitory facilities on site, so the interviewer and contact person were briefly confused (on Q.25 of the FQ) as to whether 'college/university with dormitories' or 'dormitory for workers' best described the facility, but quickly (and rightly) concluded that the 'college/university' choice was the correct one. The interviewer mentally noted it when the contact person supplied information answering later questions before they were asked, altering the wording of the later questions accordingly. While the contact person appeared to be wary and suspicious, the interviewer's competent, professional approach kept the interview moving along, until the end of the interview caught the respondent almost by surprise.

B. Second Interview

After driving back to Pittsburgh, we stopped at our second SP, a Salvation Army center. As with the previous SP, the interviewer had phoned them in advance. This time, our wait to see a contact person was less than ten minutes.

The contact person in this instance was an administrative secretary. She was cheerfully cooperative, and the interview took roughly ten minutes from the time we sat down. The facility turned out to be a residential drug and alcohol treatment program with no connection to any correctional programs. The interviewer checked box 6 (Group home/halfway house, not operated for correctional purposes) on Q.25 of the FQ, then continued to section 8 of the questionnaire, assigning it a typecode of 801 (drug/alcohol abuse group home/halfway house, ten or more residents) since it had fifty beds which were nearly always full. The interviewer handled Q.18 of the base questionnaire (18a.

Does your facility have other locations or branches; 18c. Is your facility part of a larger organization?) smoothly: the contact person listed the various levels of the Salvation Army hierarchy, and the interviewer chose the Western Pennsylvania Salvation Army as the facility's larger organization.

C. Unsuccessful Attempts to Visit Special Places

After this interview, the interviewer telephoned a hospital in the vicinity to try to set up a visit for that afternoon. The attempt was rebuffed; according to the interviewer, the contact person said rather angrily that they wouldn't answer the questions, since they had answered them many times already.

After lunch, the interviewer took some time to handle paperwork and make phone calls. At 3:00 p.m., I rejoined her for a scheduled 4:00 p.m. visit to a convent that she believed was some distance out of town. When we arrived there, we found a note saying that the nuns had had a change of schedule, and nobody would be at the convent that afternoon. The note did confirm that the nuns would be residing there in April 2000. The interviewer said she would call them back to arrange another interview time.

III. DISCUSSIONS WITH FQPV INTERVIEWER

A. Calling Ahead

The interviewer mentioned that she normally didn't call ahead to arrange appointments: in her experience, it just gave the contact person(s) an additional opportunity to refuse or delay the interview. She said she had much better luck in getting an interview by visiting the SP without phoning beforehand.

B. FQ Instrument: Degree of Difficulty

I asked her how her experience had been with the FQ instrument itself. She said that the questionnaire was quite easy to use: her interviews rarely lasted more than fifteen minutes, and the skip patterns of the questionnaire presented no problems for her. The hard part, she added, was getting to the interview itself: locating the SP, identifying and obtaining an interview with a contact person. The interview itself was the easiest part of the job, in her experience.

C. Contacts by Multiple Interviewers

The interviewer mentioned that the hospital (in II.C) wasn't the first SP she'd encountered that had been previously contacted. She had also contacted one of a chain of homes for the mentally retarded in which all inquiries were referred to a central office. In that case, the central office had been upset with hearing the same questions on multiple occasions.

#### D. Interviewer's Observations About Our Day

The interviewer said that this was a typical 'day in the life' of a FQPV interviewer, in her experience: that traveling, waits, phone calls, refusals, no-shows, and other problems took up much more of the day than the interviews, which tended to be fairly quick. She said she had rarely managed more than two completed interviews in a day, so what I observed was normal.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

The interviewer I observed knew what she was doing, and did it well. Judging by this observation, the main area of difficulty with the operation appears to be in persuading a contact person to be interviewed. This reluctance can be due to any of a number of factors, such as being contacted by multiple interviewers, or suspicious attitudes toward the government. But the fundamental problem may well be that the contact persons have many other demands on their time, and Census 2000 understandably ranks low in their priorities.

I have no recommendations at this time.

cc:

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